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Letter dated 8 October 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted by ministers of the least developed countries at their annual meeting, held on 26 September 2014 in New York, on the margins of the general debate of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly (see annex). The Ministerial Declaration is entitled "Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries".

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 16, 17 (a)-(c), 18, 19 (a), (c)-(i), 20, 21 (a), 22 (a), 23 (a)-(c), 24 (a) and (b) and 25.

(*Signed*) Jean-Francis R. **Zinsou**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 8 October 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries
New York, 26 September 2014

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the least developed countries, having met in New York on 26 September 2014 to provide strategic guidance for the full, effective and timely implementation of the Istanbul Declaration[1] and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,[2]

Recalling the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/280 of 17 June 2011, in which the Assembly called upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to integrating and implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action,

Reaffirming the overarching goal of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and enable graduation from the least developed country category,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/29 of 22 July 2014, on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,

Welcoming with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 to 2020[3] and his report on strengthening investment promotion regimes for foreign direct investment in the least developed countries,[4]

Welcoming also with appreciation the flagship report of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States on the State of the Least Developed Countries 2013, with the special theme "Eradication of extreme poverty in the least developed countries in the context of the post-2015 development agenda"[5] (forthcoming),

Welcoming the convening of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Apia, Samoa, from 1 to 4 September 2014, and the adoption of the outcome document entitled "Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway)",[3]

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[1] *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011* (A/CONF.219/7), chap. I.

[2] Ibid., chap. II.

[3] A/69/95-E/2014/81.

[4] A/69/270.

[5] See http://unohrlls.org.

Welcoming the adoption of the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals by the General Assembly on 10 September 2014,[6]

Taking note of the Climate Summit of the Secretary-General held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 23 September 2013,

Taking note also of the World Conference on Indigenous People held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 22 and 23 September 2014,

Expressing deep concern at the outbreak of the Ebola virus in a number of least developed countries, with serious adverse public health, economic and social consequences,

1. We reiterate our firm commitment to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,[2] including by integrating its provisions into our national policies and development frameworks and conducting regular reviews with the full involvement of all key stakeholders;

2. We express our deep concern over the most severe and complex outbreak of Ebola virus that has ruthlessly affected three of our countries, namely, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. We express our deep concern that the outbreak of this disease is having a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of these countries and other countries. We commend Member States, bilateral partners and multilateral organizations for their financial and in-kind assistance provided to the affected least developed countries. We call on the international community to act urgently and decisively with financial, in-kind and technical support to stop the transmission of the deadly Ebola virus and to act quickly and collectively to save the lives of the affected peoples and to curb the epidemic. We also call on the United Nations to set up a system-wide emergency public health response mechanism to address health-related emergencies in least developed countries and request the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to prepare a concept paper on this matter;

3. We express our serious concern that the global economy has been facing a challenging time for several years now, and the ongoing global economic and financial crises have had serious adverse effects on least developed countries' economic performance, as evidenced by substantial deceleration of their recent growth rate compared with the progress made during the past decade, with serious effects on the timely and effective implementation of the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action;

4. We recognize with deep concern that the least developed countries are disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change owing to their location, low income, low institutional capacity and greater reliance on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. We express our grave concern at the lack of progress in the current climate change negotiations, and urge all parties to conclude the negotiations with developed countries taking the lead to ambitiously cut greenhouse gas emission and provide adequate, predictable and additional financial and technological resources to the least developed countries. We look forward to the twentieth and twenty-first Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations

[6] Resolution 68/309.

Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Peru and France in 2014 and 2015, respectively, which should result in an ambitious outcome both in terms of mitigation, adaptation and financing;

5. Desertification, land degradation, drought, floods, cyclones, coastal erosion driven by sea level rise, salinization and other natural disasters are major obstacles for least developed countries to achieve sustainable development. There should be enhanced financial and technological support from the development partners, development banks and the Global Environment Facility to address desertification, soil infertility, droughts, floods, coastal erosion and salinization and to secure a land-degradation neutral world;

6. We recognize that least developed countries represent an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare, prosperity and food and energy security. Therefore, a successful, renewed and strengthened global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of least developed countries will contribute to the cause of peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. Further strengthening of our collective actions towards enabling least developed countries' young populations and women will more effectively contribute to equitable and inclusive development, poverty eradication, job creation and social justice;

7. The demographic transition is key to building human capital and harnessing the demographic dividend. To this end, there should be strengthened collective efforts by least developed countries and their development partners to realize the demographic dividend in least developed countries by pursuing effective policies and actions on education, training, employment, primary health, including voluntary family planning, girls and women empowerment, gender equality and issues of development related to youth;

8. We emphasize that the main thrust of the Istanbul Programme of Action is to build a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing and services; diversification; infrastructure development; enhanced investment; and structural transformation in the least developed countries. We underline the need for reorientation of the macroeconomic, industrial, agricultural, rural and infrastructure policies of least developed countries, as well as the development cooperation policies and strategies of the development partners, towards the development of productive capacities, strengthening of related institutional and human capacities and fostering of public sectors, including public-private partnerships. This involves implementing a range of mutually supportive policies aimed at building productive capacity and beneficial linkages with global value chains and dynamic sectors of world trade;

9. The development of physical infrastructure is an important prerequisite for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. A significant amount of investment and technology is essential, including through public-private partnerships, innovative financing, regional integration and appropriate institutions and regulation, to bridge the gap. It is equally important to strengthen the underlying investment climate with enhanced technical support of the development partners and international financial institutions, including by improving predictability, governance and transparency, as well as in procurement practices and policies. Development partners should provide enhanced financial and technical

support to least developed countries for their infrastructure development and management;

10. We note with concern that the efforts made by the least developed countries towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals only made limited progress owing to unmet official development assistance (ODA) commitments, limited productive capacity, growing debt burden, unfavourable market access conditions and inadequate foreign direct investment inflows, among others. We call on the development partners to enhance their support to the least developed countries to further accelerate the progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and making further significant progress by 2020, as agreed upon in the Istanbul Programme of Action;

11. We welcome the provisions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals related to migration and remittances and urge partner countries to start taking action, specifically with respect to reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances by 2030 and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent and to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies;

12. We underline that since least developed countries are the most vulnerable countries and seriously off-track in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, their development priorities should be placed at the heart and centre of the post-2015 development agenda for its legitimacy and effectiveness. The eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, especially productive capacity-building, infrastructure and information and communications technology (ICT) development, should be fully integrated into the post-2015 development agenda;

13. We take note of the outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which takes into account some challenges and priorities of least developed countries. However, we underline that a number of other important priority issues of least developed countries need to be considered in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. We stress that the three dimensions of sustainable development should be treated in a balanced manner. We call on the Member States to provide more emphasis on sustained and inclusive economic growth and productive capacity development, including infrastructure development, industrialization, product diversification along with backward and forward linkage industrialization, affordable access to energy and building domestic innovation capacity and ensuring transfer and acquisition of modern technologies. We further call on the development partners to promote mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change related to planning and management, in least developed countries, including focusing on women, youth, local and marginalized communities, and to promote the strengthening of relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacities at all levels, in particular, for preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime;

14. We take note of the report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, which provides an analytical framework for financing sustainable development and proposes a basket of policy options. However, it fails to outline specific provisions on ensuring access to these resources. We therefore call on the international community to come up with concrete,

predictable and measurable targets on the means of implementation that are adequate to achieve the post-2015 development agenda;

15. We call for an open and inclusive consultation process, engaging all stakeholders, including least developed countries, on the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. We stress that the post-2015 development agenda shall carry forward the spirit of the Millennium Declaration with:

(a) Determination to build upon and further carry on the Millennium Development Goals, particularly with an aim to fully eradicate extreme poverty;

(b) Balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;

(c) Emphasis on inclusive, equitable and sustained economic growth and building productive capacity, aiming at effectively addressing all forms of inequalities and the factors underpinning them and achieving sustainable development;

(d) Focus on the global, regional and national dimensions of sustainable development in addressing the special needs and particular challenges of least developed countries;

(e) Strengthened global partnership for the enhanced implementation of internationally agreed development goals and targets (see A/C.2/68/3);

16. We underline the principle of differential and preferential treatment for least developed countries that least developed countries need additional, preferential, concessional and most favourable treatment for their access to markets, finance, technologies, know-how and other resources and differential and flexible treatment in undertaking international commitments and obligations that are not commensurate with their capacity, needs and stage of development. This principle should be applied in the articulation of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as all other relevant processes. In this regard, we recognize that the recent outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals acknowledged this principle, although some key concerns of least developed countries, especially in the area of means of implementation, remain to be fully addressed in the sustainable development goals;

17. We underline the imperative need for a robust and rigorous monitoring and evaluation system and a "state of the art accountability framework", underpinned by political commitment, common understanding and a renewed spirit of solidarity, as an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda. The intergovernmental monitoring and accountability framework should undertake a horizontal review under which both developing and developed countries will be accountable to each other. It should take into consideration the developmental needs of the most vulnerable countries. The framework should preserve its intergovernmental nature and carry out periodic reviews of the means of implementation, including ODA, trade, debt relief, investment, transfer of technology and capacity-building;

18. We reaffirm our rejection of unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that are not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations and that impede economic and social development in least developed countries;

19. We recognize that ODA continues to be the largest and critical source of external financing for the development of least developed goals, and that it provides a buffer to weather the impacts of the unstable and volatile global economic environment. There is a shared serious concern over the drop in ODA to least developed countries by 9.4 per cent in real terms in 2012. However, it is encouraging that the bilateral net ODA to least developed countries is estimated to have increased by 12.3 per cent in 2013, in accordance with the preliminary estimate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and this positive trend should further accelerate. Donor countries that have fulfilled ODA commitments are commended and urged to do more. Donor countries that have not yet done so are called upon to fulfil their ODA commitment of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income to least developed countries at the earliest, and they should review their ODA commitments, as committed to in the Istanbul Programme of Action, and to allocate at least 50 per cent of ODA to least developed countries, taking into account the unique structural handicaps and constraints faced by least developed countries;

20. We call on the development partners to fully operationalize, in a timely manner, the Green Climate Fund with a goal of mobilizing $100 billion annually by 2020, and promoting and facilitating clean development mechanism projects in the least developed countries and addressing the needs of people displaced as a result of extreme weather events. We stress that the allocation of adaptation and mitigation funds should be additional to ODA commitments and should be fair, equitable and proportionate to the impact of climate change;

21. We invite the World Bank Group to extend its financial and technical support, through International Development Association Replenishment 17 (IDA17), for infrastructure and productive capacity-building as well as adaptation and resilience-building of all least developed countries;

22. We reiterate that the allocation of global ODA resources should take into account the structural handicaps and constraints that are unique to the least developed countries. We call on development partners to ensure the right balance in the allocation of ODA among various sectors with particular focus on productive sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture and information and communications technologies;

23. We stress the need for enhancing the quality of aid, including through transparency, accountability, long-term predictability and untying of aid for the least developed countries. We further emphasize that ODA should be channelled through the national budgetary system and should be aligned with national priorities on the basis of the principle of national ownership and leadership in the development process;

24. We emphasize that there should be a genuine and broad-based partnership that includes traditional development partners, emerging countries, the private sector, civil society, philanthropic organizations, foundations and the United Nations system and other international organizations with a concrete mutual accountability in place;

25. We recognize that, while ODA must remain the central resource and play a catalytic role, there is a need to tap additional resources, including through innovative financing mechanisms that can provide more stable and predictable

resources for development, which are based on new partnerships between countries at different levels of development and the public and private actors. Specific mechanisms should be suggested and operationalized in the post-2015 development agenda to mobilize additional resources for financing sustainable development. We stress that the innovative sources of financing should be additional, substantial and predictable and disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of the least developed countries and not unduly burden them;

26. We underline the need to ensure that least developed countries' interests are given due priority in the future work of the World Trade Organization (WTO). We take note of the decisions taken by WTO members at the ninth Ministerial Conference of WTO, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 6 December 2013, in particular the Decision on Duty-Free and Quota-Free Market Access for Least Developed Countries (WT/L/919), the Preferential Rules of Origin for Least Developed Countries (WT/L/917) and the Decision on Operationalization of the Waiver Concerning Preferential Treatment to Services and Service Suppliers of Least Developed Countries (WT/L/918);

27. We also take note of the first ever set of multilateral guidelines on preferential rules of origin for least developed countries adopted by WTO members at the ninth Ministerial Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2013, and we urge Member States to improve their rules of origin frameworks for least developed countries in line with the Bali Decision, to further facilitate exports from least developed countries;[7]

28. We welcome the decision of the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of 11 June 2013 on the extension of the transition period for least developed countries until 1 July 2021, under article 66.1, which will allow least developed countries more time to implement the TRIPS Agreement, while making full use of flexibilities provided by the Agreement;[8]

29. We welcome the initiatives taken by some countries in providing duty-free and quota-free market access to all products from all the least developed countries. However, we recognize that full implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access is yet to be achieved and the least developed countries have not been able to meaningfully benefit from the global trading system, owing to restrictive market entry conditions and supply-side constraints. In this regard, we call on the Member States to:

(a) Realize full and timely implementation of the decision to provide duty-free quota-free market access, on a lasting basis, for all products originating from all least developed countries, which should be accomplished in a manner that does not diminish the existing market access enjoyed by any least developed country; adopt simple, transparent and flexible preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries;[9] and resist protectionist tendencies and rectify trade-distorting measures, including in agriculture, that are inconsistent with multilateral obligations;

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[7] See WTO document TN/S/37.

[8] See WTO document IP/C/64.

[9] See "Least developed country package for Bali", communication of 31 May 2013, for the ninth WTO Ministerial Conference (WTO document TN/C/W/63).

(b) Address non-tariff measures and eliminate arbitrary or unjustified non-tariff barriers;

(c) Facilitate and accelerate negotiations with acceding least developed countries on the basis of the accession guidelines adopted by the World Trade Organization General Council in December 2002 and the decision to further strengthen, streamline and operationalize the 2002 least developed countries accession guidelines adopted at the General Council in July 2012;

30. We take note of the recent submission of the WTO Least Developed Countries Group (WTO document S/C/W/356) to receive special priority and preference in services sectors and modes of supply of export interest to the least developed countries. In this regard, we urge Member States to undertake measures to extend specific preferences to least developed countries services and service suppliers so that least developed countries will be able to enhance their participation in services trade;

31. We also call on development partners to provide stronger support to least developed countries to build their trade and supply-side capacity by providing at least a 50 per cent share of the Aid for Trade disbursement and by continuation of the Enhanced Integrated Framework beyond its current phase with enhanced resources and expanded mandate and strengthening their capacity to access available resources, in support of the needs and demands of least developed countries expressed through their national development strategies, as agreed upon in the Istanbul Programme of Action;

32. We recognize that foreign direct investment constitutes a dominant part of private capital flows to least developed countries, and plays a complementary and catalytic role in building and strengthening productive capacity in these countries. The least developed countries have made strong efforts to attract increased foreign direct investment flows and enhance their benefits for their economies, which were complemented by actions by their development partners. These actions appear to have had a positive impact, as indicated by a significant rise in the foreign direct investment flows to least developed countries in recent years. We are, however, concerned that the total share of foreign direct investment to least developed countries in global foreign direct investment remains only around 1.7 per cent, underscoring that much more needs to be done;

33. We stress that stronger and more focussed policies, strategies and mechanisms by least developed countries, home countries of foreign direct investment, international organizations and other stakeholders can substantially increase foreign direct investment flows to least developed countries in the coming years. In this regard, we recall the decision contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action and reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 67/220 to adopt, expand and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries. We call on the Member States to undertake a decision at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly to establish an "international investment support centre for least developed countries under the auspices of the United Nations" to provide a one-stop arrangement to help stimulate foreign direct investment in least developed countries, which can make available the following interrelated and mutually reinforcing services:

(a) Information depository for investment facilities in least developed countries;

(b) Technical support to assist least developed countries in negotiating complex large-scale contracts;

(c) Advisory support in dispute resolution;

(d) Risk insurance and guarantees in close collaboration with Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD);

34. Bringing about structural transformation in the economies of least developed countries would require transfer, acquisition and upgradation of technologies, including new technologies/broadband, domestic capacity and a knowledge base. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the General Assembly[10] with regard to a technology bank and a science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to least developed countries. We request the Secretary-General to constitute the High-level Panel of Experts as soon as possible, so that it can conclude its works within the required deadline with a view to fully operationalizing the technology bank as soon as possible with its proposed three key components,[11] namely, (a) a patent bank; (b) a science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism; and (c) a science and technology depository facility. We also welcome Turkey's decision to contribute $200,000 for the establishment of the technology bank and the science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism, and invite other donor countries to make contributions to the technology bank;

35. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) have created additional fiscal space in many least developed countries. However, there are risks of re-indebtedness because of huge development needs in least developed countries. It is a matter of deep concern that in spite of HIPC and MDRI, many least developed countries still struggle with a high debt burden. There is a need to undertake effective measures, in particular through full cancellation of multilateral and bilateral debts owed by all least developed countries to creditors, both public and private. The need for appropriate debt workouts and debt standstill for least developed countries is also essential. We call on creditors, both public and private, for additional effective measures to facilitate financing of their economic development, including access to both concessional and non-concessional resources for investment in critically needed infrastructure and development projects;

36. We welcome the launch in Cotonou on 28 July 2014 of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, in which least developed countries received a special focus throughout the decade. We stress that the Sustainable Energy for All initiative of the Secretary-General, including its targets, and the recently held Sustainable Energy for All Forum will remain a useful framework in the field of energy for the decades ahead. We underline the need for a long-term, global energy framework, under the umbrella of the United Nations, in order to lead resource mobilization and implementation in support of relevant goals under the post-2015 development agenda with a focus on least developed countries;

37. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is vital to least developed countries, particularly in regard to technical assistance, the

[10] See resolution 68/224.

[11] See A/68/217.

sharing of best practices in terms of their development, especially in areas of productive capacity-building, infrastructure, energy, science and technology, trade, investment and transit transport cooperation, and we call on the countries of the South to further strengthen their support to least developed countries in all these areas in a predictable manner;

38. We recognize that the United Nations development system is challenged to meet the growing demands for more varied assistance by doing more, quicker and better. We invite all organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank Group and international and regional financial institutions, to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, including by implementing scaled-up programmes of financial and technical cooperation; to integrate it into their programmes of work; to participate fully in its review at the national, subregional, regional and global levels; and to include in their annual reports to the Executive Boards and to the Economic and Social Council the progress made in this regard, as mandated by the Council resolution on least developed countries of 2013;[12]

39. We call for the early operationalization of the International Migrant Remittances Observatory for least developed countries without further delay with the support of the development partners. We invite the United Nations system organizations, including the World Bank Group, to undertake a feasibility study, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, with the aim of introducing "diaspora bonds" for least developed countries;

40. We underscore the importance of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015, which should effectively address the concerns and interests of least developed countries under each substantive area. We also call on the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to ensure full and effective participation of least developed countries in the conference and its preparatory process, including defraying of the cost of at least two representatives from each least developed country in the preparatory meetings, as well as in the conference;

41. We recall Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/29, paragraph 28, in which the Council invited the General Assembly to consider conducting a comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Programme of Action, in accordance with the Programme of Action, and encouraged the Assembly to take a decision at its sixty-ninth session;

42. We welcome with deep appreciation the generous offer of the Government of Turkey to host the high-level United Nations conference on the midterm review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries Conference;

43. We invite the General Assembly to undertake a decision at its sixty-ninth session on holding a comprehensive midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action, in accordance with paragraph 157 of the Programme of Action, for a period

[12] See Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/46, para. 9.

of five days, to be preceded by two intergovernmental preparatory committee meetings with a duration of five days each. We also invite the current session of the Assembly to ensure that the high-level Conference on the comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries:

(a) Shall be held in Turkey no later than the first quarter of 2016;

(b) Shall result in an intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome;

(c) Shall ensure that the summaries of the plenary meetings and other deliberations of the Conference are included in the report of the Conference;

44. We underline that the meeting of the preparatory committee will be preceded by two regional-level preparatory meetings, one in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa, which will include Haiti, and the other in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which will include Yemen, and that those regional-level meetings will be supported by broad-based and inclusive country-level preparations. The outcomes of the regional-level preparatory meetings should be considered at the global review;

45. We decide that the scope of the midterm comprehensive global review would be as follows:

(a) Undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action by least developed countries and their development partners, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues;

(b) Reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of the least developed countries made at the major United Nations conferences, summits and related processes, including the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developing Countries, third United Nations Conference on Financing for Development and the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, as well as other major United Nations, international and regional conferences and processes, in particular the needs related to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions, and to support the least developed countries in eradicating poverty and integrating beneficially into the global economy by building their productive capacities;

(c) Strengthen and reinvigorate the global partnership for development for least developed countries by agreeing on substantial scaling up of international support measures and mechanisms in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action within a mutual accountability framework between least developed countries and their development partners, in order to ensure the timely, effective and full implementation of the Programme of Action during the remainder of the decade, as well as of the post-2015 development agenda as it relates to least developed countries;

46. We consider that a meeting at the Heads of States or Governments level will be held during the midterm review conference, and we will take a formal decision on this at the next annual ministerial meeting of least developed countries in 2015;

47. We recall paragraph 26 of resolution 67/220, in which the Assembly invited the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), to include implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action as a standing item on the agenda of the Board, and in this connection invite the Secretary-General to organize a special CEB meeting during the midterm review conference with a view to ensuring full mobilization of the United Nations system in support of least developed countries and full and coordinated implementation by the system of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the midterm conference outcome, the post-2015 development agenda and the outcomes of all other international and regional conferences and processes as they relate to least developed countries;

48. We invite the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council to organize special thematic events as preparatory to the midterm review conference;

49. We stress that the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, as the focal point, in accordance with mandates given by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001, should ensure that those preparations are carried out effectively, and should mobilize and coordinate the active involvement of the organizations of the United Nations system;

50. We invite the organs, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to undertake sectoral appraisals in their respective fields of competence on the implementation of the Programme of Action, with special emphasis on areas where implementation has remained insufficient, and to make proposals for new measures as necessary, as further inputs to the preparation for the midterm comprehensive global review, and in this regard affirms that appropriate inter-agency meetings should be convened to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of the entire United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions;

51. We underline the importance of country-level preparations as a critical input to the preparatory process for the midterm comprehensive global review and to the implementation of and follow-up to its outcome, and in this context call on the least developed countries to undertake their national reviews on the implementation of the Programme of Action, with a particular focus on progress, obstacles, constraints, actions and measures necessary to further its implementation; and in this regard, we invite the United Nations country team to support least developed countries in preparation of their national reports in close collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States;

52. We request the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Development Group, to ensure the full involvement of the United Nations resident coordinators and country teams in the least developed countries in the preparations for the midterm comprehensive global review, in particular at the country level, including in the preparation of national reports;

53. We also request the Secretary-General to submit, in a timely manner, a comprehensive report for the midterm comprehensive global review;

54. We underscore the critical importance of the full and effective participation of the least developed countries in the comprehensive global midterm review of the Programme of Action and its preparatory process at the national, regional and global levels, stress that adequate resources should be provided, and in this regard request the Secretary-General to mobilize extrabudgetary resources in order to cover the cost of participation of two government representatives from each least developed country in the high-level midterm review;

55. We recall the ambitious goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to enable half of the number of least developed countries to reach the stage of graduation by 2020, and commit to take the necessary steps to complete the graduation process. We underline that each instance of successful graduation will constitute an extraordinary success not only for the countries themselves, but also for the United Nations and for development cooperation by the international community. We are encouraged that notwithstanding persisting challenges and constraints, several least developed countries have announced their intention to reach the status of graduation by or around 2020. Countries such as Angola, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and Rwanda, among others, have set graduation as a goal in their national development strategies;

56. We recall paragraph 26 of resolution 68/224, in which the Assembly requested all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to extend necessary support in a coordinated manner to the countries that have expressed their intention to reach the status of graduation by 2020, in preparing their graduation and transition strategy;

57. We invite the United Nations system organizations, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to extend the necessary technical support to the countries aspiring to graduation in developing their graduation and smooth transition strategies. We call on the development partners to support the implementation of the graduation strategy with a view to enabling them to graduate from the list within the stipulated time;

58. We call on the Committee for Development Policy of the Economic and Social Council to continue to give due consideration to the specific geographical constraints and vulnerabilities of each least developed country, including small island and landlocked least developed countries, least developed countries with mountains and fragile ecology, low-lying coastal least developed countries, those with extreme dependency on primary commodity exports, low agricultural productivity and food insecurity, climate and environmental vulnerability, energy insecurity and least developed countries emerging from conflict;

59. We welcome with appreciation the Cotonou Agenda for productive capacity-building in least developed countries, which was adopted at the ministerial conference held in Cotonou, from 28 to 31 July 2014, on the theme "New partnerships for productive capacity-building in least developed countries". We take note with satisfaction that a number of important initiatives were announced at the Conference, including:

(a) United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, with special focus on least developed countries;

(b) International Investment Support Centre for least developed countries;

(c) Regional centres of the technology bank in the context of ongoing work of a technology bank for least developed countries;

(d) South-South Technology Transfer Facility for least developed countries;

(e) Diaspora bonds for least developed countries guaranteed by the international financial institutions and regional banks;

(f) A new initiative of the Group of Seven on strengthening assistance for complex contract negotiations to provide least developed countries with extended and concrete expertise for negotiating complex commercial contracts focusing initially on the extractive industries;

(g) Local finance initiative to promote domestic investment in productive infrastructure at the local level;

60. We invite all stakeholders to take appropriate actions for the implementation and follow-up of the Cotonou Agenda for productive capacity-building in least developed countries, in particular the key initiatives;

61. We invite the General Assembly, at its sixty-ninth session, to include an agenda item entitled "New partnerships for building productive capacities in least developed countries", and call on the Member States to endorse it;

62. We sincerely acknowledge the supportive role being played by the friends of least developed countries, and invite the group to further strengthen its support to the effective realization of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the midterm conference outcome, the post-2015 development agenda and the outcomes of all other international and regional conferences and processes as they relate to least developed countries;

63. We recall the annex to the Ministerial Declaration of Least Developed Countries entitled "Decision on a coordination mechanism for the least developed countries, adopted at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 15 November 2001", contained in document A/C.2/56/5 (see also A/C.2/68/3, para. 44);

64. We reaffirm that the chairmanship of the Bureau will rotate alternately between the African Group, including Haiti, and the Asia-Pacific Group;

65. We recall the provisions contained in the Ministerial Declaration of Least Developed Countries of 2012 on the election of the Bureau and on taking into account the need for continuity on the ongoing important work on the post-2015 development agenda, agree that the tenure of the chairmanship will be extended from a two-year term to a three-year term for the period 2012 to 2021, and reaffirm that the responsibility of the preparation of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will rotate alternately between the Chair of the African Group and the Chair of the Asia-Pacific Group, starting with the Chair of the African Group undertaking the preparation of the fifth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, to be held by the end of the current decade.